



FACTS at a GLANCE

The CGFNS Certification Program (CP), Credentials Evaluation Service (CES) and the Iowa Board of Nursing

All candidates for RN and LPN licensure in Iowa must pass the U.S. national licensing examination (NCLEX). Individuals who were educated and registered/licensed as a nurse in a foreign country must have their credentials evaluated by the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) prior to application for the NCLEX if they have never been licensed in a U.S. jurisdiction. This fact sheet provides information about the CGFNS evaluation processes for the RN and LPN applicants. Applicants who were licensed in another U.S. jurisdiction by examination (NCLEX-RN® or NCLEX-PN®) may apply for licensure in Iowa by endorsement. Application materials may be obtained by contacting the Iowa Board of Nursing at (515) 281-6488 or at <http://www.state.ia.us/nursing>.

What is the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS)?

The Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) is an immigration-neutral, nonprofit organization based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The organization offers evaluation and assessment services for internationally-educated nurses applying for licensure in the United States, such as the CGFNS Certification Program (CP) and the CGFNS Credentials Evaluation Service (CES). CGFNS has more than 29 years of experience in credentials evaluation, and is the only credentials evaluation organization dedicated primarily to the credentialing of international nurses.

What is the CGFNS Certification Program (CP)?

Foreign-educated applicants for RN licensure in Iowa by examination who have never been licensed in a U.S. jurisdiction must have a CGFNS Certificate¹. Most U.S. state boards of nursing require nurses educated outside the United States to have a CGFNS Certificate before taking the U.S. registered nurse licensure exam (the NCLEX-RN® examination). The CGFNS Certification Program is designed specifically for first-level general (Registered) nurses educated outside the United States who wish to pursue a career in the United States as a registered nurse. The program is comprised of three parts: a credentials review of the nurse's education, registration and licensure; the CGFNS Qualifying Exam, which tests nursing knowledge; and an English language proficiency examination: either the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the TOEFL iBT, the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), or the academic module of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

Healthcare Profession	(TOEFL) Test of English as a Foreign Language	TOEFL iBT	(TOEIC) Test of English for International Communication	(IELTS) International English Language Testing Service
Registered Nurse (RN)	207 (computerized version) 540 (paper/pencil version)	83	725	6.5 (Academic module only)

Graduates of health professional programs in certain countries are exempt from the English proficiency exam requirement; please refer to the CGFNS website or *Pathways Handbook* to see whether you qualify for exemption. After successfully completing all parts of the Certification Program, an applicant is awarded a CGFNS Certificate.

What is the CGFNS Credentials Evaluation Service (CES)?

Foreign-educated applicants for LPN licensure in Iowa by examination who have never been licensed in a U.S. jurisdiction must complete the CGFNS Credentials Evaluation Service (CES) requirements prior to application for the NCLEX-PN® examination². The CGFNS Credentials Evaluation Service (CES) evaluates the nursing education and registration credentials you earned outside the United States, and presents them in terms of their comparability to U.S. credentials. All nurses educated outside the United States, including registered or professional nurses, as well as enrolled or practical nurses can use the CES. The CES evaluation is presented in a report that can be used for licensure, immigration, employment, or admission to a U.S. nursing education program. Typical users of the report include regulatory agencies (for example, state boards of nursing), universities/colleges, or employers in the United States. These reports are customized, and can be sent to two different recipients (you also receive a copy). Each CES Report is designed to be advisory in nature, and to provide guidelines and recommendations to the designated recipients. A CES Report provides factual information about your educational preparation and registration/licensure to help the Iowa Board of Nursing make decisions. The individual state boards, in this case, the Iowa Board of Nursing, make all licensure decisions.

¹ An applicant who was licensed as an RN in another U.S. jurisdiction but never took a U.S. national licensing examination must apply for RN licensure in Iowa by examination. Application materials may be obtained by contacting the Iowa Board of Nursing at (515) 281-6488 or at <http://www.state.ia.us/nursing>. Applicants who provide verification of RN licensure in another U.S. jurisdiction and in the native country are exempt from the CP requirement in Iowa.

² An applicant who was licensed as an LPN/LVN in another U.S. jurisdiction but never took a U.S. licensure examination must apply for LPN licensure in Iowa by examination. Application materials may be obtained by contacting the Iowa Board of Nursing at (515) 281-6488 <http://www.state.ia.us/nursing>. Applicants who provide verification of LPN/LVN licensure in another U.S. jurisdiction and in the native country are exempt from the CES requirement in Iowa.

How does the Certification Program (CP) differ from the Credentials Evaluation Service (CES)?

The CGFNS Certification Program (CP) is only for first-level, general Registered Nurses who were educated outside the United States. The Certification Program reviews a nurse's academic records and professional registration documents (Credentials Review), evaluates nursing knowledge through the CGFNS Qualifying Exam, and determines English language proficiency through the TOEFL, TOEIC or IELTS. Applicants who complete the CGFNS Exam and an acceptable English exam are issued a CGFNS Certificate. The CES Report summarizes an applicant's credentials but does not include a pass/fail eligibility review, nor a nursing examination, nor an English examination as in the Certification Program. The CES evaluates the educational/professional credentials of multiple categories and levels of healthcare professionals, while the Certification Program accommodates ONLY first-level general Registered Nurses. A critical difference is that the Certification Program indicates one's likelihood of passing the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN® examination). The CES does not make any placement recommendations, and can be utilized by most foreign-educated healthcare professionals.

Application Process for the Certification Program (CP)

- Please note that the entire application packet and Pathways Handbook for the CGFNS Certification Program is available on-line at www.cgfns.org. You may also apply directly on-line via the CGFNS On-Line Application System.
- After reading the entire handbook, complete the "Application Form for the CGFNS Certification Program" and send it, along with other requested documentation (such as your secondary/high school exam certificate or diploma) and full payment, to CGFNS. The current fee for the CGFNS Certification Program is \$368.00 USD (fees subject to change). Full payment for all services must be included with your Application.
- Complete the FRONT of the "Nursing Education Form: Certification Program" form and send it to your nursing school(s) in order that your school completes all information requested on the BACK of the form and sends copies of your academic records directly to CGFNS.
- Complete and send the "Request for Validation of Registration/License" form to the licensing authority in your country of nursing education (where you were initially registered as a Registered Nurse), as well as to any other licensing authority where you currently hold a license. If your diploma authorizes the right to practice in your country, you must also forward this form to the institution that issued your diploma (school, Ministry of Health, etc.) and request that the completed form be mailed to CGFNS.
- You must apply directly with the examining institution in order to schedule an examination date for the English proficiency examination. All English scores must be sent directly to CGFNS from the examining institution; CGFNS will NOT accept an official score report submitted by the applicant or any third party. Scores must be sent directly to CGFNS from the examining body, and both the CGFNS Qualifying Examination and the English proficiency exam must be taken and passed within two years of each other.

You will be contacted by CGFNS by mail regarding the status of your application and the need for any outstanding documentation. You may also check the status of your file at any time at www.cgfns.org via the On-Line Application System. Once your file has been approved, you will be notified and scheduled for the next available CGFNS Qualifying Examination and receive further details regarding the procedures. Presently, the CGFNS Qualifying Examination is offered four times a year, at over 50 test sites worldwide.

Application Process for the Credentials Evaluation Service (CES)

- Please note that the entire application packet and handbook for the CGFNS Credentials Evaluation Service is available on-line at www.cgfns.org. You may also apply directly on-line via the CGFNS On-Line Application System.
- After reading the entire application handbook, complete the "Application Form for the Credentials Evaluation Service" and send it, along with other requested documentation and full payment, to CGFNS. Full payment for all services must be included with your Application.
- The Iowa Board of Nursing requires a CGFNS **Healthcare Profession & Science Course-by-Course Report**. The current cost of this report is \$278.00 (fees subject to change).
- Complete and send the "Request for Academic Records" form (contained in the Packet) to your nursing school(s) in order that your school sends copies of your full academic records directly to CGFNS.
- Complete and send the "Request for Validation of Registration/License" form to the licensing authority in your country of education (country in which you were initially registered/licensed) and to any other licensing authority where you currently hold a license outside of the U.S. If your diploma authorizes the right to practice in your country, you must also forward this form to the institution that issued your diploma (school, Ministry of Health, etc.) and request that the completed form be mailed to CGFNS.

You will be contacted by CGFNS by mail regarding the status of your application and the need for any outstanding documentation. You may also check the status of your file at any time on our website via the On-Line Application System. Standard processing time for CES Reports is 6-8 weeks upon receipt by CGFNS of all documentation and fees. All CES Reports are sent electronically to the US State Boards of Nursing. Your copy will be sent to you by mail.

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Contact the CGFNS Customer Service Department at (215) 349-8767 ext 476 from 9 AM to 5 PM Monday through Thursday, and 9 AM to 4:30 PM on Friday (EST); or, send an email via our website under "Contact Us". The CGFNS Automated Voice Response System can be reached at (215) 599-6200 for 24 hour/day, 7 day/week applicant file status updates.

All documentation sent to CGFNS must be sent by mail; CGFNS will NOT accept any application forms, or other academic or licensure documentation, by fax or email. All academic records and transcripts must be an original document sent by mail to CGFNS by your school, or, in the event that your school is closed, the institution designated as the official repository to hold that document. All registration/licensure documentation must be an original validation sent by mail by the issuing/licensing body. Transcripts and license validations will NOT be accepted if sent by any other source, even if they are contained in a sealed envelope. Documentation received from the issuing bodies that is not in English will be translated by CGFNS for an additional fee.